

Oracle Dark Skies Committee
Minutes April 9, 2015
Kannally House, Oracle State Park

Attendees:

Mike Weasner, Chair; Evaline Auerbach, Recorder; Kent Taylor, Pinal County Director of Open Space and Trails; Waldo Vasquez; MaryHelen Vasquez; Dale Redies; Charotte Poole; Wendy Ostrander; Chip Parfet.

Weasner called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

The minutes were approved as sent to members.

Weasner reported:

- March 21st was a big, wonderful day. The gate sign is now installed below the "Oracle State Park" sign.
- The committee, along with Friends and the rangers need to decide where we are going to permanently display the awards, a letter to Bryan Martyn, a proclamation from BOS, and the ODSC plaque We also need to decide where to keep the telescopes and to display them.
- Telescope training will be April 30, 2015, from 5 - 8 pm.
- The Committee and OSP have to submit annual updates to the IDSP Nomination Package.
- We need to check out having a meeting elsewhere some of the time as we are now in a new mode. Chip will check out having a meeting at Saddlebrooke Ranch.
- There is now more money in the ODSC account that Weasner handles with a \$10.00 donation. In PayPal \$145.05. The volunteers get paid only if the event is in the official star party brochure. Weasner will pay himself back for his loan of \$117.20 from this account, the amount he loaned to pay for the posters. Excel expense format for a 501c3 will be used eventually.

Bembenek and Weasner held a meeting with Supervisor Rios in January 2015 to brainstorm about how Pinal County could be incentivized to update lighting fixtures and otherwise work against light pollution. Kent Taylor, Director of Pinal County Open Space & Trails, spoke at the 9 April ODSC meeting on the possibilities of County involvement. He hopes to facilitate whatever the County sees as the output of the presentation that Bembenek and Weasner made to Mr. Rios. Specifically:

- * Tax rebate or credit - unless somebody can provide a county example, this may not work because these are municipal issues. Weasner hasn't yet found any county examples but continues to research it.
- * Electricity rebate/credit. County doesn't do anything with electricity. Weasner: the utility companies want to reduce their bills and have funds set aside for grants to do so (APS).
- * Hardware rebate - same as tax credit.
- * Public acknowledgement: The Oracle committee was successful because we were NOT the county trying to tell people what to do.
- * Gold Canyon would probably like to have the same thing at Lost Dutchman State Park. They could use help to replicate what the ODSC did.

* Areas of the county that would come in to the program to become dark skies could be picked out and the OSP/ODSC has a “tremendous story to tell.”

* Pinal County has a good lighting code for the county - anything new (after Jan. 2011) needs to meet it.

* Government agencies have budget problems but they are “spending a lot of money throwing light out where they don’t really need it”. It would be fantastic to inventory fixtures and do cost estimates but its a problem finding someone who would do it. Still, when government mandates stuff, like lighting codes, they should look at their own house. One suggestion: the County could let dark sky groups in their own communities inventory lighting. They could probably reduce another 5-7% on top of the already mandated budget cuts.

* Question: When would the cycle be to update the zoning code - it’s been in for five years.

Answer: The code in place in 2009 had been there since 1965, so is probably going to last.

* Plaque or certificate from the Board of Supervisors for lighting improvements is possible.

Weasner:

- The ODSC can work at Community Involvement.
- Two of the most recent dark sky areas are “sister communities” in Colorado.
- He had written to the Governor’s transition team regarding a government lighting summit.
- Once there are two Dark Sky Parks in Arizona (Oracle and Red Rock) Sue Black, Arizona State Parks Executive Director, could go to the Governor to start a discussion on statewide dark sky projects.

• Pinal, Cochise, and Coconino Counties might work to be “Dark Skies Counties.”

In what has become a regular event, Weasner presented to the committee a surprise - the committee and spouses have been invited to spend an evening at Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter. Up to 12 people. Dates suggested are after May 20, 2015. Those wishing to attend and who were at the meeting were Mike Weasner & Laurraine, Chip Parfet & Jean, Evaline Auerbach, Wendy Ostrander, Charlotte Poole and both Mary Helen and Waldo Vasquez. Others put in a request on behalf of Jennifer Rinio, Anna Lands and Stan Bembenek. Parfet also volunteered to drive a vehicle with space for five.

The next meeting will be held on May 7 at 6:30 pm. Place TBA.

Signed,

Evaline J. Auerbach, Recorder

Signed,

Mike Weasner, Chair